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Part Three: Economic and Cultural Issues

The Japanese Army and the Control of Southern Thai Railways, 1941–1945

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Introduction

Most of the studies on the Japanese control of railways in Thailand during World War II tend to focus only on the construction of the Thai–Burma Railway, making it seem as if this were the only railway line that the Japanese Army sought to control and manage during the war. However, Thai official sources clearly reveal that the Japanese Army actually controlled all of Thailand’s three main railway lines—the northern, eastern and southern. The southern railway line in particular was so important that the Japanese Army had to manage it in two ways: first, controlling an existing line to be used for the transportation of troops and supplies across border to Malaya, and second, constructing two new railway lines branching out to Burma, i.e. the Thai–Burma “Death” Railway and the Chumpon–Kraburi line. Control and management also differed between the northern and eastern lines.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine various aspects of the Japanese Army’s control over southern Thai railways during the war. The paper especially pays attention to the way by which the Japanese exerted control over southern Thai railways, and the impact that this control had on the Japanese Army and the Thai Railway Department. This paper also includes a case study which strongly suggests that the wartime relationship between Thailand and Japan was not on equal basis, that the Japanese Army was ready to use military power to control the railway management and to put strong pressure on the Thai government to facilitate goods supply and military transportation all through the war.

1. The Japanese Army and the Control of Southern Thai Railways

From available primary materials, we can conclude that the Japanese Army regarded the southern railways as most important in their overall policy of control over the Thai railway system. This is because the southern railways were directly linked with the frontline battlefields in both Burma and Malaya. The Japanese policy for the southern railways consisted of two plans. The first was to operate special trains on existing routes for the transportation of Japanese troops across the Thai–Malaya border from Padang Besar to Alor Star and from Sungei Golok to Kota Bharu.¹ The second was to build two new railway tracks extending from the existing southern railways into Burma. These were the Nong

¹ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut (Supreme Command Headquarters), 2.4.1/5 Khosanoe kandoen rot khabuan thahan Yipun ok nok khet-dean Thai [Proposal on opening a railway for Japanese military trains to cross the Thai border], 20 April 2485 (1942).

Pladuk–Kanchanaburi–Thanbyuzayat line (the so-called the Thai–Burma Railway or Death Railway), and the Chumphon–Kraburi line (known as the Kra Canal Railway).

1.1 The Management of Special Trains on Existing Southern Route

Japanese control over the Thai railways started right after the outbreak of the Pacific War. On December 11, 1941, the Japanese Army presented a draft of a Japan–Thailand Military Alliance. On December 21, Prime Minister, Field Marshal Phibunsongkram signed this document. After the agreement was ratified, detailed negotiations began concerning the use of railways for military purposes. On February 21, 1942, the Japanese submitted a “Draft Agreement on Military Transportation,”² to set criteria and guidelines for military transportation on the three existing Thai railway routes. The Japanese Army defined “military transportation” in a broad sense to include the transportation of troops, soldiers, civil officers, businessmen, animals, and anything else described by the Japanese Commander as military property.³

Table 1 shows the routes and the number of special trains to operate which was requested by the Japanese for military purposes. It clearly shows that the Japanese Army attached the greatest importance to the procurement and arrangement of special trains on the southern railway lines to transport troops and military supplies.

Table 1. The Routes and Numbers of Special Trains Requested for Military Operations by the Japanese Army during World War II⁴

Route	Between	Trains requested (Regular)	Carriages requested (Regular)	Trains requested (Urgent)
East	Bangkok–Sawai Donkeaw	3	27	6
North	Bangkok–Uttaradit	2	50	4
	Uttaradit–Chaingmai	3	11	8
South	Ban Dara–Sawankhalok	1	50	3
	Bangkok–Ban Pong	4	50	6
	Ban Pong–Hat Yai	3	27	6
	Hat Yai–Songkhla	1	27	3
	Hat Yai–Sungei Golok	1	27	2
	Hat Yai–Padang Besar	4	27	9

Table 2 shows the actual operation of carriages for Japanese military use from January to December 1943. The total number of carriages on the three railway lines was 165,605, out of which the southern railways carried 113,120 carriages or 68.31%, as compared to 23.82% and 7.87% for the eastern and northern lines respectively. In terms of the percentage, the southern railways represented the highest

² NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1/3 *Khotoklong kiaokae kanchai ngoen khadoisan lae khakhonsong noi lamliang nai ratchakan kongthap Yipun duai rotfai khong Prathet Thai* [Arrangement on payments for fares and transportation costs for Thai trains used by the Japanese Army] (21 February 2485 [1942]–24 September 2488 [1945]).

³ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1/26 *Banthuek chuaicham kiaokap kankhonsong nai ratchakan thahan Yipun kap rotfai Thai* [Aide-mémoire on transport for Japanese military usage and Thai railways] (15 October 2485 [1942]–22 December 2486 [1943]).

⁴ Tabulated from information in *ibid.*

in August 1943 when the Japanese Army carried 12,379 carriages out of the total 15,677 carriages, accounting for 78.96%. As the Japanese military had expected, the southern railways turned out to be the most important rail link, as the logistics line directly connected with the battlefield in Malaya.

Table 2. Carriages Used by the Japanese Army on the Southern, Eastern and Northern Railway Lines (Jan–Dec 1943)⁵

Month	Carriages used	Southern		Eastern		Northern	
		Carriages	%	Carriages	%	Carriages	%
Jan	11,518	7,608	66.05	3,898	33.84	12	0.10
Feb	10,354	8,648	69.84	3,722	30.06	12	0.10
Mar	13,070	9,107	69.68	3,252	24.88	711	5.44
Apr	12,690	9,740	76.75	2,750	21.67	200	1.58
May	13,263	10,244	77.24	2,905	21.90	114	0.86
Jun	11,451	8,985	78.46	2,192	19.14	274	2.39
Jul	12,338	9,721	78.79	2,497	20.24	120	0.97
Aug	15,677	12,379	78.96	2,910	18.56	388	2.48
Sep	17,408	13,208	75.87	2,906	16.69	1,294	7.43
Oct	14,056	8,430	59.97	3,336	23.73	2,290	16.29
Nov	16,288	7,692	47.40	4,326	26.66	4,210	25.94
Dec	15,524	7,358	47.40	4,750	30.60	3,416	22.00
Total	165,605	113,120	68.31	39,444	23.82	13,041	7.87

All in all, within the three years and eight months that the Japanese Army was based in Thailand, the southern railway was the most important route used for transporting troops and supplies from Padang Besar to Alor Star and from Sungei Kolok station to Kota Bharu in Malaya.⁶ This route became available after the Japanese successfully occupied Malaya and Singapore on January 1 and February 15, 1942 respectively.

1.2 The Construction of New Railways

The construction of new railway tracks was another aspect of the Japanese Army's strategy for southern Thai railways. The Japanese built two new railways as the extension of the existing southern lines. One was the Thai–Burma Railway (the Death Railway) extending from Nong Pladuk station in Ratchaburi through Kanchanaburi to Thanbyuzayat in Burma. Another was the Chumphon–Kraburi Railway (or the Kra Canal Railway) extending from Chumphon station to Kraburi station in Ranong. The latter was further connected via a sea route to Victoria Point in Burma. The Japanese Army planned to use the Thai–Burma Railway and the Kra Canal Railway to send reinforcements to Burma to prepare for an invasion of India.

The Japanese secretly began negotiations for the construction of the new railways in 1942. Lieutenant–Colonel Iwayashi, Director of Transportation of the Japanese Army, was dispatched from To-

⁵ Tabulated from information in NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.6/14 *Tarang kanchai rotfai khong kongthap yipun pi 2486* [Table of Japanese Army train usage in 2486] (2 January 2486 [1943] to 12 January 2487 [1944]).

⁶ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1/5 *Khosanoe kandoen rot khabuan thahan Yipun*.

kyo. He presented a “Draft Thailand–Japan Agreement on the Construction of the Thai–Burma Railway” on March 23, 1942. Japan urged Thailand to consider and approve the agreement as soon as possible, claiming that they had an urgent need and that they had already trained skilled Thai technicians for this construction work.⁷ The Thai government was not given sufficient time to consider very carefully. On September 16, 1942, the agreement was signed by Field Marshal Phibun, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander, and General Moriya Seji, representative of the Japanese Army in Thailand.

Shortly after the construction work of the Thai–Burma Railway began, the Japanese Army headquarters in Tokyo sent General Yamada, a military envoy, to Thailand. On May 13, 1943, he secretly presented another draft agreement on the Kra Canal Railway or Chumphon–Kraburi Railway. The Japanese claimed that they were facing difficulty in sending troops and armaments to Burma by sea and air due to the heavy attacks by the British. Therefore, it was necessary to construct the Chumphon–Kraburi Railway.⁸ Again; the Thai government had to respond immediately. According to Thai sources, the government was afraid of possible military retaliation if it refused. The Thai government responded very quickly, only three weeks after the first contact with General Yamada. On May 31, 1943, Phibun as Supreme Commander signed the agreement with Lieutenant-General Aketo Nakamura, Commander of the Japanese Army in Thailand. The two agreements required Thailand to assume various burdens. For example, Thailand must allow the Japanese Army to use land for the railways for free of charge; to cooperate in recruiting mechanics and laborers and provide equipment for the construction works; and to solve any problems that arose during construction.⁹

The Japanese Army wanted to complete the 359-kilometer Thai–Burma Railway within one year. For this purpose, the army used many POWs and also recruited Chinese and Indian laborers from Singapore and Malaya. They were transported by the southern railways across the Thai border to Ban Pong and detained at Don Tum Temple Camp in Ratchaburi. Then they had to walk or ride on trucks to Kanchanaburi. According to the secret documents, in September 1943 in the area of Kanchanaburi alone there were 130,144 men recruited to construct the Thai–Burma Railway: 24,764 Japanese soldiers, 41,570 POWs, 40,900 Indian laborers and 22,190 Chinese laborers.¹⁰ Even so, manpower was insufficient to serve the urgent plan of using the route to send supplies to the troops advancing into the Burma–India border area and being counterattacked by the British. The Japanese Army forced the POWs to work hard day and night for thirteen months until the construction was finished on October 17, 1943. The POWs and laborers did not have enough food and suffered from disease and natural di-

⁷ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/2 *Khotoklong lae khoplikyoi rawang Thai kap Yipun kiaokap kansang thangrotfai chueam rawang Thai kap Phama* [Agreement and sub-agreement between Thailand and Japan on constructing a railway connecting Thailand and Burma] (23 March 2485 [1942]–23 January 2486 [1943]).

⁸ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.3/4 *Banthuek kanprachum rueang khotoklong kiaokap kansang thangrotfai thahan kham phuenthi khokhot Kra (Chumphon–Kraburi)* [Minutes of the meetings on agreement on constructing a military railway across the Kra Isthmus (Chumphon–Kraburi)] (12 May 2486 [1943]–23 April 2487 [1944]).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.5.2/4 *Kankhluenwai khong thahan Yipun nai changwat Ratchaburi–Kanchanaburi* [Movements of Japanese soldiers in Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi provinces] (28 February 2485 [1942]–30 June 2488 [1945]).

sasters. It is recorded that 12,339 POWs died during the construction of the Thai–Burma line, thus it was given the name of “the Death Railway.”

For the case of the Chumphon–Kraburi line, the Japanese Army had to construct the La-un canal pier as well. This was because the railway would not be connected directly with Burma. The railway would only run from Chumphon to Khao Fachi in Kraburi, the closest point of contact with Victoria Point in Burma. It was necessary to build a pier to ship soldiers, food and armaments across the sea.¹¹ For the constructing of this route, the Japanese Army did not use POWs but hired Chinese and Malay laborers whom Japanese companies recruited in Singapore. These workers traveled by train and truck and finally walked to the site.¹² The secret documents of the Committee in Chumphon and Ranong recorded the number of laborers. For example, from 15 August to the end of September 1943, a thousand laborers were sent from Singapore to Chumphon by train every day. In total, 30,000 men were sent during that period.¹³

In addition, the Japanese Army hired local Thai workers in Chumphon and Ranong. Many local people were willing to work for the construction, because of the high payment, 1.20–1.50 baht per day.¹⁴ However, as manpower was still in short supply, the Japanese Army had to ask Thai officers to find more workers, offering even higher payment of 2.50–3.00 baht per day. Consequently, workers from other provinces such as Trang, Surat Thani, Phatthalung, Songkhla, Phetchaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Pathum Thani, Ayutthaya, and Nakhon Nayok flocked to Chumphon and Ranong until the railway construction was finished on December 25, 1943.¹⁵

2. The Impact on the Japanese Army and the Thai Railway Department

The Japanese Army invaded Thailand on December 8, 1941. Three days later, on December 11, the army presented a draft agreement for the military utilization of Thai railways. It was on December 21 that the Thai government signed the document. However, the primary documents in the National Archives show that the Japanese Army had already started using the northern, eastern and southern railways as early as December 9, in other words, even before the Thai official agreement.¹⁶

2.1 The Military Transportation of the Japanese Army

The Japanese Army control of the southern Thai railways had various effects on Japanese military

¹¹ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1/7 *Naeosenthang lae phaenphang sathani Chumphon thangyaek thangrot fai tat thangluang* [Route and diagram of Chumphon station junction of railway and highway] (31 May 2486 [1943]–19 January 2488 [1945]).

¹² NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.5.2/10 *Kankhlueanwai khong thahan Yipun nai changwat chumphon* [Movements of Japanese soldiers in Chumphon province] (2 March 2486 [1943]–25 November 2487 [1944]).

¹³ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.3/6 *Uppakon kankosang thangrotfai thahan sai Chumphon–Kraburi* [Equipment used in the construction of the Chumphon–Kraburi military railroad line] (22 May 2486 [1943]–14 December 2487 [1944]).

¹⁴ Interviews with Mr. Lap Rueangkamnoet, age 80, Chumphon (5 October 2003) and Mr. Supat Siriphan, age 83, Ranong (6 October 2003).

¹⁵ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.3/8 *Kammakon lae chang* [Laborers and technicians] (12 June 2486 [1943]–18 October 2487 [1944]).

¹⁶ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.6/3 *Tarang kanchai rotfai khong kongthap Yipun pi 2485* [Table of Japanese Army train usage in 2485] (2 December 2484 [1941]–2 December 2485 [1942]).

operations. The Army could fully utilize the southern Thai railways to transport soldiers and provisions to its troops in Burma and Malaya. It could also transport POWs and Indian and Chinese workers from Singapore and Malaya to construct new railways, and then use the newly-built railways to transport troops and armaments to Burma. For example, when the Japanese took control over the southern railways, they could transport foods using Thai trains from Padang Besar to Alor Star and from Sungei Golok to Kota Bharu, and then use Malay trains to go further into the south.¹⁷ More specifically, the Japanese Army carried rice to its troops in Malaya through the routes from Thonburi station (Bangkok Noi) to Padang Besar, and Bangsue to Padang Besar almost on a daily basis; 24–25 covered goods wagons were used per day.¹⁸ The documents of the Supreme Command Headquarters reported the amount of rice transported every month in detail, thus confirming the success of the Japanese Army in controlling and using the southern Thai railways for its military purposes. This fact also reflected Thailand's location at the center of the Japanese Army's food supplies in continental South-east Asia during the war.

Another secret document recorded in detail the number of soldiers and armaments being transported on the Thai–Burma Railway. This is another illustration of the Japanese success in using the southern Thai railways. Table 3 shows how successfully the Japanese Army utilized the Thai–Burma Railways in transporting armaments to its troops in Burma. Within a period of only four months from July 1 to October 31, 1944, the Army was able to use 396 covered goods wagons to transport 120 pieces of artillery, along with bullets and shells. They also transported twenty Autonomous Armoured Vehicles (AAV), twelve ammunition carriers, and four armoured tanks. Moreover, there were seventy-eight closed wagons whose contents are not specified.

Table 3. Armaments of the Japanese Army Transported by the Thai–Burma Railway during July 1–October 31, 1944¹⁹

Date	Number of carriages/type of carriage	Transported armaments
July 1, 1944	22 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
July 3, 1944	2 Malaya Flat Wagons	2 pieces of artillery
	5 Malaya Flat Wagons	Artillery Shells
July 5, 1944	5 Malaya Flat Wagons	10 pieces of artillery
July 6, 1944	3 Malaya Flat Wagons	6 pieces of artillery
July 7, 1944	3 Malaya Flat Wagons	6 pieces of artillery
	13 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
July 8, 1944	5 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
	4 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 Autonomous Armoured Vehicle (AAV)
	3 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)

¹⁷ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1/5 *Khosanoe kandoen rot khabuan thahan Yipun*.

¹⁸ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.6/15 *Kanbanthuk yutthopakon thahan Yipun* [Transport of armaments for the Japanese Army] (10 February 2486 [1943]–9 November 2487 [1944]).

¹⁹ Tabulated from information in *ibid*.

Table 3. Continued.

Date	Number of carriages/type of carriage	Transported armaments
July 9, 1944	7 Malaya Flat Wagons	7 AAV
July 10, 1944	7 Malaya Flat Wagons	14 pieces of artillery
July 12, 1944	1 Malaya Flat Wagons	1 Artillery
July 15, 1944	14 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
July 18, 1944	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	4 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 Armoured Cars
July 20, 1944	4 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 AAV
July 24, 1944	1 Malaya Flat Wagons	1 piece of artillery 1 Trench Gun
July 26, 1944	4 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 pieces of artillery
July 30, 1944	15 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
August 13, 1944	4 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
August 15, 1944	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
August 16, 1944	3 Malaya Flat Wagons	6 pieces of field artillery
August 17, 1944	1 Malaya Flat Wagon	4 pieces of field artillery
August 21 1944	3 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Commodities (Closed wagon)
	4 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 pieces of artillery
September 11, 1944	2 Malaya Flat Wagons	4 pieces of Anti-Aircraft Artillery
September 13, 1944	2 Malaya Flat Wagons	2 AAV
September 20, 1944	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
September 25, 1944	5 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
September 26, 1944	3 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	3 pieces of artillery
	3 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
September 27, 1944	10 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
September 29, 1944	11 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
September 30, 1944	11 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	14 Japanese Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 3, 1944	9 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	8 Malaya Flat Wagons	8 pieces of artillery
October 5, 1944	10 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 8, 1944	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	5 Malaya Flat Wagons	5 pieces of artillery
October 9, 1944	7 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 11, 1944	13 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	6 Malaya Flat Wagons	6 pieces of artillery
October 12, 1944	4 Thai Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	17 Malaya Flat Wagons	17 pieces of field artillery
October 13, 1944	3 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	3 AAV
	15 Malaya Flat Wagons	15 pieces of artillery
October 16, 1944	1 Malaya Flat Wagon	1 pieces of artillery
	35 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and Commodities
October 17, 1944	15 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 20, 1944	25 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and Commodities
	2 Malaya Flat Wagons	2 pieces of artillery
October 21, 1944	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 23, 1944	20 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and Commodities
October 24, 1944	42 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 25, 1944	6 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets
October 26, 1944	15 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and Commodities
October 27, 1944	12 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets

Table 3. Continued.

Date	Number of carriages/type of carriage	Transported armaments
October 28, 1944	10 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and Commodities
	8 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Artilleries Shells
October 29, 1944	22 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and 450 Japanese Soldiers
October 30, 1944	15 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets and 50 Japanese Soldiers
October 31, 1944	25 Malaya Covered Goods Vans	Bullets, Commodities and 250 Japanese Soldiers

The documents in the Thai National Archives report that the Japanese regarded the Thai–Burma Railway as vital for the transportation of troops and weapons. Towards the end of the war, the Allies sent aircraft to bomb several railway lines used by the Japanese Army, particularly important railway bridges such as the bridge over the Kwai Noi River in Kanchanaburi. This bridge was heavily raided on January 11, 1945, when twenty Allied planes dropped about 130 bombs. On February 25, 1945, two planes dropped about sixteen bombs destroying the piers. The Japanese Army had to temporarily close the Kanchanaburi–Tanbyuzayat line.²⁰

2.2 The Burdens of the Thai Railway Department

The control of the Japanese Army over the southern Thai railways directly and adversely affected the Thai Railway Department. According to the agreement between Thailand and Japan, the Department had to help the Japanese military in various ways. For example, they had to prepare special train schedules for the Japanese. They had also to offer special prices, far cheaper than the normal charges. The Department had thus to bear huge losses in fares and freight charges. Even so, the Japanese did not pay in cash, but simply accumulated a long-term debt.

Table 4 shows the total unpaid bills of the Japanese Army for fares and freight charges in June 1942. The biggest unpaid amount in June 1942 was for bills 236/85 and 232/85. According to the contents of the bills, the biggest portion of the costs came from the transportation between Bangkok station (Hua Lamphong) to Padang Besar, Bangkok to Hat Yai, Thonburi (Bangkok Noi) to Hat Yai, and Hat Yai to Padang Besar, all of them belonging to the southern routes.

Although the Japanese Army paid with checkes drawn on the Yokohama Specie Bank in some months, the total amount of the accumulated debts reached as much as 8,262,011.97 baht by January 1945.

The bilateral agreement stipulated that the Japanese should liquidate their debts to the Department within three months or every three months. The exchange rate applied for this payment was of the same level with that of the Thai army, much less favorable than the normal rate. Even when the Japanese Army paid, the Department almost always found discrepancies between the amounts of invoice and real payment, but the Department had to tolerate them. Of course, the Japanese Army more frequently failed to pay on time. The Thailand–Japan Alliance Co-operation Department once requested

²⁰ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.3/7 Banthuek *kanprachum Khana Kammakan Pongkan Phai (Rotfai) Thang Akat* [Minutes of meetings of the Air Security (Railway) Committee] (23 October 2487 [1944]–22 August 2488 [1945]).

Table 4. Unpaid Bills of the Japanese Army for Fares and Freight Charges for June 1942²¹

Bill number	Unpaid amount (Baht)
232/85	94588.20
233/85	635.50
234/85	99.80
235/85	2702.80
236/85	458285.50
237/85	188.80
238/85	433.60
239/85	1007.80
240/85	27.80
241/85	472.60
242/85	4.60
243/85	89.30
244/85	50.40
245/85	37.20
246/85	9.90
247/85	757.50
248/85	257.00
249/85	8.80
250/85	1.50
251/85	103.00
252/85	134.00
253/85	5.20
254/85	1238.30
255/85	1789.10
256/85	951.30
257/85	1524.60
258/85	775.10
Total unpaid amount, June 1942	556,177.70

the Japanese Army to liquidate the debt, but the Japanese officer in charge, Division Deputy Ishida, simply replied, “No money, please wait.”²²

Another example was the case of the construction projects for new railways. In order to cooperate with the Japanese for the new railway construction, the Department had to recruit laborers and allocate special funds to purchase equipment. This kind of obligation brought heavy financial burdens on the Department. According to the Agreement and the Sub-Agreement between Thailand and Japan for these construction projects, the Thai government, through the Transport Ministry and the Thai Railway Department, had to provide loans of 32 million baht for the Thai-Burma Railway and 15 million baht for the Kra Canal Railway.²³

In addition, the Department had to prepare its own budget to purchase the necessary equipment for the construction of the two railways, including stations. Although the bilateral agreement stipulated

²¹ Tabulated from information in NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut. 2.4.17/15 *Song bin kongthap yipun khang chamra duen Mithunayon 2485* [Unpaid bills of the Japanese Army, June 1942] (12 January 2485 [1942]) and 2.4.1.7/9 (Puek 1-3) *Raikan ngoen khakhonsong lamliang kongthap Yipun lae kanchamra ni* [List of transportation costs of the Japanese Army and debt payments] (23 February 2485 [1942]–11 April 2489 [1946]).

²² NA Bo. Ko. Sungsut 2.4.1.1/1 *Kanprachum Khana Kammakan Borihan Krom Rotfai* [Meetings of Railway Administration Committee] (5 October 2484 [1941]–13 September 2486 [1943]).

²³ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/8 *Ngoppraman kanngoen nai kansang thangrotfai sai Kanchanaburi* [Budget for construction of the Kanchanaburi railway line] (16 September 2485 [1942]–23 August 2488 [1945]).

that the Japanese Army should pay in advance to the Department to buy equipment, in reality they only spent 500,000 baht for the Thai–Burma Railway and 200,000 baht for the Kra Canal Railway (This money was actually taken from the first installment of the loan promised by Thailand for the construction of railways, the total amount of which was 4,000,000 baht). Moreover, the Japanese did not transfer this entire amount to the Department, but reserved a part of it for their own purchasing.²⁴ At any rate, the amount which the Department had received from the Japanese was not sufficient to purchase the equipment. The Thai Railway Department frequently requested the Thailand–Japan Alliance Co-operation Department to urge the Japanese Army to liquidate the debt, but the army only paid back in installments.²⁵ Therefore, when the war was over, a huge amount of this debt remained unpaid.

Conclusion

During World War II, for the case of Thailand, which was the only independent country in the region, the Japanese Army utilized its territory as a base from which Japanese military reinforcements, food supplies, weapons and war equipment could be transported to Burma and Malaya. To accomplish this task, the Japanese Army negotiated with Thailand for co-operation, and placed the Thai railways, especially the southern railways under its control. This control, however, could be exerted only at the expense of Thailand's independence and sovereignty. The paper has shown the so-called co-operation, which Thailand had other choice but to accept, placed heavy burdens on the Thai government, the Thai Railway Department, and the local people.

²⁴ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/2 *Khotoklong lae khoplikyoi rawang Thai kap Yipun*.

²⁵ NA. Bo. Ko. Sungsut, 2.4.1.3/18 *Ngoppraman lae nisin thi Yipun tong chai hai thai nai kansang thangrotfai chueam rawang Thai kap Phama* [Budget and Japanese debts to Thailand for the construction of the Chumphon–Kraburi Railway] (23 March 2485 [1942]–23 January 2486 [1943]).